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COLUMBIA FALLS - There was a time when this parking lot at the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company would have been filled with hundreds of cars, even thousands of employees. But that time has since passed, and CFAC is now headed in a different direction, moving into the demolition phase of many of these buildings. That's why we felt it appropriate on Monday to speak to some of the former employees and get their thoughts.

The giant facility sits nearly empty now, save for a few cars who belong to the few who are dismantling the plant.

Longtime Columbia Falls resident, owner of Melby's Furniture and one time plant employee, Steve Melby toured the old skeleton this weekend.

"Sad. You know it was kind of sad to see. You know, I worked back there in the summer of 1976, I was a summer employee, and then over the last, you know I guess 38 years or so, I've been out there selling different window products and floor coverings though the years, so I got to know the plant pretty well."

Melby tells us anyone that worked or spent time near CFAC would feel an eerie calm walking into the facility now.

"And you go out there today and what you notice is no people. No sounds. No noise and no smell. I mean the aluminum plant had it's own distinct smell, and it's pretty well dissipated and it's just kinda sad to see."

Dave Rice who works for Melby tells us a similar story having worked for CFAC for more than 32 years. Sadness seems to be universal.

"Sad. A lot of people I think were waiting for it to open, and it's just not going to happen. It's a sad day, it's like I said, it supported a lot of people in the valley and it was good to a lot of people," Rice said.

CFAC Spokesperson Haley Beaudry told us Monday that the few people at the plant currently will work towards removing asbestos and any other contaminants before buildings will be torn down, making way for future development.

Steve Melby tells us that he won't be there to watch them come down.

"No, no. While I was there, they were actually hauling in equipment to begin tearing it down, so that was...that was interesting."

There is no definite timeline for when some of the outlying buildings will actually be demolished.









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